

Faith and Inspiration

What Kind of God?

The existence of suffering in our world is demonstrably irrefutable. Poverty, hunger, violence, abuse, oppression, disease, and natural disasters are all unfortunate but factual aspects of our reality of which we are reminded daily in news headlines. While there are those who attribute these sad occurrences of life to fate or the whims of capricious deities and demons, it is perhaps not unexpected that many are compelled to question any belief in any deterministic or supernatural component of our universe as an attempt to explain or interpret significance from such adversities and afflictions.

The existential, spiritual quandary that many people wrestle with — or in some cases ultimately dismiss — is not merely "if" there is a God, but rather "who" this God is, if he does exist — that is, what kind of God he is.

Those who insist on an atheistic or agnostic approach to the question will often direct criticism or even ridicule at the notion of a God who exhibits the kinds of characteristics that they perceive as illogical, improbable, and unpalatable, and with which they are unable to reconcile their observations and perceptions.

It is of course not unusual to encounter expressions such as "I can't believe in a God who allows or inflicts suffering." Many of us could probably imagine feeling sympathy with this kind of position since it is, perhaps rightly, critical of the concept of a God who is either dispassionately passive and uncaring, or who is deliberately malicious and cruel — both of

which seem to be generally unappealing prospects. In the film "Star Trek V: The Final Frontier," the crew of the starship Enterprise encounters a powerful alien entity who presents itself as "God" in an effort to lure a charismatic fanatic (Spock's half-brother Sybok) to its aid. When Captain Kirk questions the supposed divine being's need for a starship, the entity lashes out with harmful force. The ensuing dialogue flows naturally from this confrontation.



Vincent V. Marshburn
Homestead
Mennonite Church



KIRK: Why is God angry?
SYBOK: Why? Why have you done this to my friend?
ENTITY: He doubts me.
SPOCK: You have not answered his question. What does God need with a starship? (blue light rays shoot from the Entity's eyes again,
ENTITY: Do you doubt me?
McCOY: I doubt any God who inflicts pain for his own pleasure.
SYBOK: Stop! The God of Sha Ka Ree* would not do this!
ENTITY: Sha Ka Ree? A vision you created. An eternity I've been imprisoned in this place! The ship! I must have the ship! Now ... give me what I want!
SPOCK: Sybok, ... this is not the God of Sha Ka Ree, ...or any other God!
[*Sha Ka Ree: Vulcan concept of paradise/heaven]

Believers would most likely be inclined to agree with McCoy and Spock about the nature of any God

that would willfully cause harm to his creation out of spite or ire. Although there are many who contend that the "God of the Old Testament" is primarily such a "God of wrath," this is an overly simplistic and shallow interpretation of the text and does not take into account the abundance of demonstrations of patience and mercy on the part of that "God of the Old Testament," who is of course the same "God of the New Testament."

Our struggle to understand suffering is nothing new, and our inadequate and incorrect comprehension that leads to questionable or flawed conclusions is also not solely a modern invention. Some of Jesus's own disciples in the New Testament may have possessed faulty assumptions about why people suffer, demonstrated quite vividly in John 9:1-3, when they ask Jesus if it was due to sin that a man was born blind. As usual, Jesus's answer is succinct and revealing: "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him."

Even if believers can reasonably acquit God of malevolent motives and can insist in the face of misery and misfortune that God himself remains good and pure, an honest or natural question that might arise from such an assertion is that if it appears that God — despite presumed benevolent intentions — permits such things to occur, could it be that he is in fact incapable of preventing or stopping them?

One is quite likely to encounter the quintessential "all-powerful/all-good" argument against there being a God or against there being an effective God. The alleged logic of the critique claims that an all-powerful God cannot be all-good, since a good God would not allow suffering, and that an all-good God cannot be all-powerful, since a powerful God would be able to stop suffering.

This argument insists that these qualities are mutually exclusive but does not fully explain why. In the realm of logic, there is the concept of the fallacy of false premise, which is quite evident in this entire supposition. Furthermore, this argument makes the inaccurate and incomplete assumption that these are the only qualities of God that define him as God.

In the Bible, God is presented in so many multi-faceted and multi-dimensional depictions. The immeasurable complexity and majesty of God is underscored by the fact that human definitions of "power" and "good" are inherently limited in their ability to convey the true depth of character present in the God that inhabits and transcends the entire universe. Bible passages such as Isaiah 55:8-9, Job 11:7-9, and Romans 11:33-34 help to express just how immensely sublime and unfathomable God truly is.

Indeed, how does one account for the kind of love, grace, holiness, justice, and other manifestations of divine will, purpose, and vulnerability that the God of the Bible exhibits?

The answer lies ultimately in the gospel message of redemption of all creation, beginning with the reconciliation between God and humanity through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Part of that answer is that in this life, suffering can serve a divine purpose, and that ultimately God will restore his creation and eliminate all suffering. This answer is the impetus for the journey of faith, hope, and love that God invites us to experience with him. For me, this seems like the kind of God worth embracing.

OBITUARY

George Henry Eicher

April 13, 1918 - May 25, 2021

George Henry Eicher passed away May 25, 2021 at the age of 103.

He was born to Clemmons and Mammie Eicher in Louisville Ky. on April 13, 1918.

George was preceded in death by his wife Ethei Parmley Eicher.

He is survived by his son George Eicher (Pamela Tucker Eicher), granddaughter Rebecca Albright (Ben), great grandson Michael Albright, great granddaughter Cenora Eicher, granddaughter Emily Eicher.

He came to Homestead in 1944 as manager and pilot for Delta Crop Dusting Service. Delta dropped the crop dusting service and went into passenger service but he remained with agriculture and started his own crop dusting business. He was the Homestead Municipal Airport manager and used the field for his dusters. The airport was where Harris Field is today.



He was a founding member of the Dade County Pollution Control Board.

George was the Director of the Homestead Housing Authority for 20 years starting in 1968. During this time he oversaw the construction of modern housing to replace World War II barracks at the South Dade and Redland Labor Camps. He also oversaw building the Everglades Labor Camp.

In 1973, he and a group of civic minded men applied for a charter and started Community Bank of Homestead. He was Chairman of the Board Emeritus.

Miami Dade County celebrates Pride Month



On Wednesday, June 2, Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava celebrated the start of Pride Month and raised the LGBTQ Pride Flag over Stephen P. Clark Government Center for the first time.

Miami-Dade County will fly the Pride Flag for the first two weeks of Pride Month, and the Progress Flag for the second two weeks of the month, to honor the diversity within the LGBTQ community.

"Miami-Dade County's greatest strength

is our diversity, and my administration is committed to honoring and lifting up the voices of all our residents," said Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava. "We strive to make this community a more welcoming place for all people, no matter their sexual orientation, identity, or gender, and I'm proud to raise the Pride flag for the very first time at Government Center as a symbol of inclusion, tolerance, and shared pride in our LGBTQ community."

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